

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2573

S E C R E T BANGKOK 6141

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AEMR, CB

SUBJECT: EVACUATION OF PERSONS FROM CAMBODIA

REF: A) STATE 080168; B) BKK 6034; C) BKK 6042; D) PP 6089

E) SAIGON 4569

SUMMARY. I MUCH APPRECIATE THE PROMPT ACTION TAKEN BY THE DEPARTMENT ON FUNDING FOR EVACUEES AND REFUGEES FROM CAMBODIA WHO ARE TRANSITING THAILAND. I STRONGLY URGE THAT SIMILAR PROMPT PROCEDURES BE WORKED OUT FOR MOVING THESE PEOPLE IMMEDIATELY ON THROUGH THAILAND FOR ADDITIONAL PROCESSING ELSEWHERE. OTHERWISE WE ARE GOING TO HAVE SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH THE RTG, AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS GOING TO END UP WITH A BIG BLACK EYE OVER WHAT IS ACTUALLY A VERY HUMANITARIAN AND COMPASSIONATE ACT.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE RTG AGREED READILY TO GRANT SEVEN DAY TRANSIT VISAS TO KHMER AND THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS AND FIFTEEN DAY TRANSIT VISAS TO AMERICANS EVACUATED FROM CAMBODIA BY THE USG. THE FIRST GROUP OF EVACUEES ARRIVED ON APRIL 3 AND ARE NOW REACHING THE END OF THE SEVEN-DAY PERIOD. THE RTG IS EXTENDING VISAS OF PERSONS IN THIS CONDITION BUT MUST BE EXPECTED TO SHOW INCREASING RELUCTANCE TO GRANT ADDITIONAL EXTENSIONS. WE HAVE HAD EXCELLENT COOPERATION FROM THE RTG THUS FAR, AND DO NOT WANT THIS JEOPARDIZED. SHOULD EVACUATIONS CONTINUE FROM CAMBODIA FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD,

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OR SHOULD IT LATER BECOME NECESSARY FOR REFUGEES FROM

ELSEWHERE TO TRANSIT THAILAND (WHICH THE RTG DOES NOT WANT), RTG GOODWILL AND COOPERATION WILL BE ESSENTIAL (REF. C, D AND E).

2. THERE ARE ALSO STRONG ADMINISTRATIVE AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS REASONS FOR BEGINNING TO MOVE PERSONS EVACUATED OUT OF CAMBODIA RAPIDLY FROM THAILAND. THE TENT CAMP AT UTAPAO WAS ESTABLISHED TO CARE FOR TRANSITS AND IS OPERATING WELL IN THAT CAPACITY. ALTHOUGH THE FACILITY MIGHT TAKE 1600 IF PEOPLE ARE JAMMED INTO IT, WE BELIEVE IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO KEEP MORE THAN 1200 THERE FOR MORE THAN A WEEK OR SO AT A TIME. TODAY THE LEVEL OF ARRIVALS SEEMS TO BE STEPPING UP AND THE CAMP MAY REACH CAPACITY WITHIN THE NEXT SEVERAL DAYS. A CROWDED TEMPORARY CAMP WITH PERSONS UNHAPPY WITH LIVING CONDITIONS BECAUSE OF SPACE, SANITATION, RECREATION, ETC. WILL ATTRACT PUBLIC ATTENTION AND CRITICISM. WE DO NOT WANT THIS, NOR WOULD THE RTG LIKE IT.

3. SOME FAMILIES HAVE NOW BEEN THERE A WEEK, MOREOVER, AND ARE BECOMING RESTLESS TO MOVE ON. IF WE DO NOT BEGIN TO MOVE PEOPLE ON SOON, WE WILL NOT ONLY ENCOUNTER PROBLEMS WITH THE RTG OVER EXTENDING THEIR STAY IN THAILAND BUT WILL HAVE TO MOVE PEOPLE TO MORE PERMANENT FACILITIES. THIS MEANS HOTELS AT A VERY MUCH INCREASED COST AND A CONSEQUENT LOSS OF CONTROL OVER THE REFUGEES. THE LATTER POINT IS PARTICULARLY BOTHERSOME BECAUSE OF OUR PLEDGE TO THE RTG TO GUARANTEE THE ONWARD TRAVEL OF EVACUEES. MOVING THEM ELSEWHERE IN THAILAND WOULD PROBABLY ENCOUNTER THE STRONG OBJECTIONS OF THE RTG.

4. THUS FAR WE HAVE BEEN FORTUNATE IN RECEIVING MINIMUM PUBLICITY ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF LARGE MEMBERS OF CAMBODIAN REFUGEES IN THAILAND BROUGHT HERE BY THE USG. WE ARE TRYING TO ENSURE THAT WHEN THEY BECOME NEWS, IT WILL BE IN A CONSTRUCTIVE WAY, BUT THE THAI ARE VERY SENSITIVE TO REFUGEES. ONE OF THEIR MAJOR AND MOST PUBLICIZED PROBLEMS DOMESTICALLY IS ALIEN COMMUNITIES, E.G. THE VIETNAMESE. WE, THEREFORE, WANT TO ILLUSTRATE RAPIDLY TO THE THAI THAT THE CAMBODIAN REFUGEES ARE HERE ONLY IN TRANSIT, AND THE BEST WAY TO DO THIS IS TO BEGIN MOVING THEM OUT OF THAILAND AS SOON AS
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POSSIBLE.

5. I THEREFORE URGE THAT THE DEPARTMENT IMMEDIATELY DETERMINE PROCEDURES AND ISSUE US INSTRUCTIONS WHICH WILL PERMIT THE PROMPT ONWARD MOVEMENT OF CAMBODIAN REFUGEES OUT OF THAILAND.
MASTERS

NOTE BY OC/T: DISTRIBUTION COORDINATED WITH S/S-O:MR. HOGANSON

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